



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

Doctrinal Catechesis Session
Mary Birmingham

Eucharist: Introductory Rites



The Gathering. Mark Hakomaki. 2007.



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Option 1: Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2: Use the prayer which is below.

Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.

I trust in you: strengthen my trust.

I love you: let me love you more and more.

I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning.

I long for you as my last end.

I praise you as my constant helper.

And I call you as my loving protector.

I want to do what you ask of me:

In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.

Let me love you Lord as my God.

And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.

A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



Note to the Catechist

This session is larger than most doctrinal sessions and will require more time to complete. Thus, it is advisable to break this session into two parts that will span two different sessions. Part one extends to the stop sign. Follow the directions from that point.



Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the **Breaking Open the Word** worksheet for this week.

Catholic Faith, Life & Creed Version 2.0

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Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Steven Olds
Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR
† Most Rev. John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

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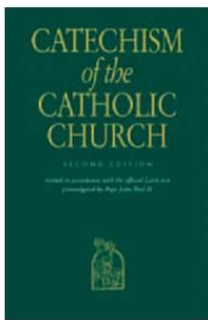


Sharing Human Experience

Catechist begins the session by posing these questions to the group:

- ▶ Think of a memorable worship service in your present parish or in a different church.
- ▶ What was it about the service that made it memorable?
- ▶ In what way were made to feel welcome (or not)?
- ▶ What did the experience communicate to you about God, about community, and about our need to worship God?

Catechist uses their responses to launch into a discussion about the overview of ritual and the introductory rites of the Mass.



Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Catechist continues:

We have set aside the next few weeks to explore the eucharistic liturgy. There are four parts to the mass.

- ✓ First: Introductory Rite
- ✓ Second: Liturgy of the Word
- ✓ Third: Liturgy of the Eucharist (and Communion)
- ✓ Fourth: Dismissal

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ If someone asked you, why you go to church and why you worship God what would you tell them?

Catechist uses their responses to launch the following discussion.

- ▶ We worship God because it actualizes, that is, it makes real and present, our relationship with God and one another.
- ▶ Worship puts us into contact with salvation history, with the God of that history who is God of the present and of the future.
- ▶ We worship God because we need to worship God. God does not need our worship, however.
- ▶ God created us with a longing to worship God. When we worship God, we experience what it means to be fully human.
- ▶ God is completely deserving of our praise.
- ▶ God fills our emptiness, responds to our loneliness, and expands our human heart. God fills the void with his presence.
- ▶ Worship is the way we actualize—make real—our beliefs about God. The principle, *lex orandi lex credendi—the rule of prayer constitutes the rule of belief—we pray what we believe and we believe what we pray*, reminds us that in our worship we bring the truths of our faith front and center. We remember them, celebrate them, pray them, and make them our own.

Second Vatican Council

- ▶ Most significant event of 20th century was renewal of liturgy.
- ▶ The first action of the Second Vatican Council was to reestablish the liturgy to its rightful place, central to the life of the Church, the source and summit of the Church's life and action.
- ▶ Primary goal of the Council was to restore and secure full, conscious active participation in the liturgy.
- ▶ The desired outcome was transformation of people's lives which is called *metanoia*. This is a complete conversion of heart, mind, and soul. The concern is not the renewal of ritual texts or vernacular, but people's lives.

Power of ritual

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question. Break the group into dyads then surface insights in the wider group.

Family rituals

Catechist gives an example of family ritual. See appendix #1. Catechist then presents the following material:

- ▶ Name one of your family rituals; what is it and why do you do it?
- ▶ In order to express our identity, we use ritual activity.
- ▶ When people gather for sports events, they engage in ritual, they don specific clothing, they cheer together, they scream the praises of their team.
- ▶ Psychology teaches us that ritual is an essential element in the development of the human person and the human community.

Definition:

Ritual is behavior which is repetitive and has meaning assigned to it. Ritual is never individualistic or private. Most organized groups engage in ritual activity that defines them as a group.

Catechist asks participants if they belong to any such groups. Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ Who belongs to an organized group such as Elks, American Legion, Knights of Columbus, Women's Club, Daughters of the American Revolution, a fraternity, or sorority?
 - Does your group participate in rituals? If so, what is their purpose and what do they express?
- ▶ Ritual has a purpose or a goal.
- ▶ Ritual is a powerful way for people to express the deepest meaning and values which make them who they are.
- ▶ Ritual allows contact with the event or person responsible for calling the community into existence. In the case of the Church, this is Jesus.
- ▶ Ritual offers the possibility of continually encountering the event or person and embracing the meaning associated with it.
- ▶ Ritual invites a commitment by participants to embrace a new way to live based on the meaning found in the rituals.
- ▶ Religious rituals are patterned ways in which we gather, remember, give thanks, ask God's blessing, celebrate, and go forth to establish the reign of God.
- ▶ Rituals are the vehicle by which we engage God and one another. We enter into relationship and foster that relationship through the power of ritual.
- ▶ We are symbolic people. We need our bodies to be and express who we are.
- ▶ Liturgy uses ritual to bring the life, mission, and actions of Jesus into our midst, to make his mission present to us.
- ▶ Liturgy uses the real things of life to help us get in contact with God.
- ▶ Liturgy or ritual proclaims and remembers stories about God.
- ▶ The liturgy uses ritual language to communicate and make present the divine.
- ▶ Ritual language inherent in the liturgy includes symbols, ritual actions and gestures,

music, ritual prayers, and sacred space.

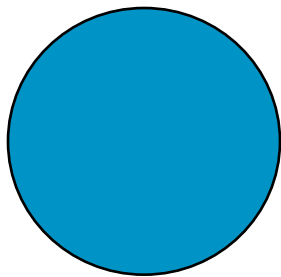
Ritual Language

Thus, ritual uses symbols and symbolic actions to speak.

- ▶ The symbols and symbolic actions of the liturgy help us get in touch with who God is and how God acts. For example, the symbol of light expresses evokes and makes present the reality that God brings us out of darkness, God lights our path, and God warms our heart with the light of his presence.
- ▶ We need our bodies in order to express who we are. Human beings are symbol makers. Human beings possess a basic, intrinsic need to find meaning in their existence. As such, they use symbols to express their identity and how they understand that identity.
- ▶ Christians use symbolic elements (bread, wine, book, oil, water, cross, hands, garment, community, cross) to express how they understand themselves in relation to creation, in relation to God and one another.
- ▶ Consider the symbol of the bread. We are people of the bread. We draw meaning from our participation in the Eucharist. It is the primary food that feeds us. We consume the bread, the bread consumes us. We take, bless, break, and share the Bread of Life, and we too are taken, blessed, broken and shared. We are willing to allow our bodies to be broken, just as Christ's Body was broken for us. We are willing to become bread for others, to go out in the world and spiritually and practically feed others, and to feed the world. We are given access to the sacrifice of the cross that took place 2,000 years ago but the effects of which continue today as Christians gather to remember it in the eucharistic liturgy.

How a symbol functions.

Exercise: Catechist makes a large circle cut out of construction paper.



Catechist holds the circle up to the participants and conveys the following:

Our ancient faith communities taught us how a symbol functions. The teacher would take a coin from his pocket. He would insist. "In my hand is a coin. It is complete and whole." (Hold up the circle.) He would then break the coin in half. He would put one half in his pocket and hold up the other half for all to see. (Tear the paper circle in two and put one half behind your back). He then would say,

"You know the whole coin exists; you just cannot see it. You can see one half of the

coin, but the other half is hidden. This is how a symbol works. The part of the symbol you can see, touch, and feel is one half of the reality; the other half is hidden. The hidden part is the spiritual part of the reality. For example, in the Eucharist, the part you can see is the bread; the hidden reality is that it is the Body of Christ.”

Symbols express and make present that which they signify. If a symbol could speak, it would not say: “I am like” or “I resemble.” It would say, “I AM.” Symbols embody the reality. Bread is the body of Christ; oil is the presence of Holy Spirit.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question.

- ▶ Think of the last liturgy you experienced. What were some of the symbols you observed and encountered in the liturgy?
- ▶ What did those symbols communicate to you?

Symbols

There are nine dominant symbols that express our identity.

- ▶ cross, word, water, oil, light, hands, garment, bread, wine, and community

Ritual Actions

- ▶ The ritual actions and gestures of the liturgy convey and express a rich theology: raised hands, hands in the *orans* position (praying hands), processions, kneeling, bowing, standing, or sitting.
- ▶ Inherent in every gesture and action of the liturgy is a theology that expresses what we believe about God and about our relationship with God.
- ▶ The posture of standing in and of itself possesses a rich heritage.
- ▶ In the early Church, standing was interpreted in light of the resurrection. Tertullian demanded that Christians stand on Sundays and during Easter time as a symbol of joy in the resurrection. They were forbidden to fast and to kneel during those times.
- ▶ Jerome agreed: “It is a time of joy and of victory when we do not kneel or bow to the earth, but risen with Christ, we are raised to the heavens.”
- ▶ Justin said that “we do not kneel on Sundays as a sign of the resurrection through which we are freed from our sin by the grace of Christ.” We are an Easter people and standing with hands raised is an expression of our joy in the resurrection. Refer to the handout on posture.
- ▶ The gestures and ritual actions of the liturgy contribute to the beauty and noble simplicity of the liturgy (GIRM, 42).

Catechist invites participants to make a sign of the cross.

- ▶ What do we express when we make the sign of the cross?
- ▶ What does that ritual gesture mean?
- ▶ What are we communicating when we make that gesture?

Music

- ▶ Music is ritual language. St. Paul exhorted Christians to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16).
- ▶ Music conveys in melody and song the deepest emotions of the heart. St. Augustine said, “The one who sings, prays twice!” Music captures our longing for God in ways words cannot.
- ▶ Music gathers a community. Music expresses praise, lamentation, joy, and sorrow.
- ▶ Music expresses the truths of our faith in a medium that touches the depths of the soul.

Ritual Prayers

- ▶ The ritual prayers and the spoken words of the liturgy is primary ritual language.
- ▶ Ritual prayers express our theology of God and of the Church. Ritual prayer expresses what we celebrate and believe about the seasons of the Church year.
- ▶ Ritual prayer expresses and gives definition to the ritual actions.
- ▶ Word and action together are required in every sacramental sign. Ritual prayer is integral language in the liturgy.

Space

- ▶ Sacred space is ritual language. Sacred space speaks to us. Why do we gather in a church rather than a football stadium? Sacred space speaks to us of the holy, the transcendent.
- ▶ The sights, smells, the art and environment prepares us and propels us to worship today but also puts us in touch with the communion of saints worshipping throughout salvation history.
- ▶ Sacred space speaks to us of our participation in that holy college of believers and with our participation in that history.

In sum

Symbols, ritual actions, words, gestures, and space comprise the ritual language that communicates the divine in our midst and form us into God’s people. We are transformed by the liturgy because of the power of the ritual.



Sharing Faith

Catechist shares a story of transformation flowing out of the liturgy. See appendix #2 and #3. Catechist invites a parishioner to come and share how liturgy has transformed him or her and brought meaning to his or her life. Catechist invites participants to share a story of how liturgy changed their heart, perspective, behavior, attitude, or actions.

The Meaning of Liturgy

- ▶ The primary ritual celebration for Catholics is the eucharistic liturgy.
- ▶ We remember and make present the death and resurrection of Jesus, the paschal mystery.
- ▶ Liturgy has everything to do with our lives.
- ▶ Every sacrament, every gathering of God's people, celebrates the paschal mystery (the life, mission, passion, death, resurrection, ascension of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit). However, we also live the paschal mystery in our everyday lives. We join our lives to Christ, and in the process, we participate in his ongoing work of redemption in the world.
- ▶ The word Liturgy comes from the Greek *liturgia*, which means the *work of people*.
- ▶ The work of the people we focus on today is the first part of the Mass—the introductory rites.
- ▶ In order to understand a theology of the introductory rite we must understand what it means to be Church. We must understand our Church's ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology: theology of Church

The Church teaches....

- ▶ The first sacrament we encounter when we gather for Mass is Christ himself who is present to us in four ways:
 - Christ is present in community
 - Christ is present in the proclamation of the word
 - Christ is present in the body and blood of Christ, the Eucharist
 - Christ is present in the person of the priest (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 7)
- ▶ The Church teaches that Christ is the first sacrament of God.
- ▶ What is a sacrament? A sacrament is a sign that makes that which is signified present. Thus, as a sacrament of God, Jesus is a sign. He is the reality of God's presence.
- ▶ When we gather for liturgy, we also believe that the Church is like a sacrament. In other words, the Church is a sign. It is the reality of God or Christ in our midst.
- ▶ The people of Israel in the Old Testament believed that the community itself was a sign of God's presence.
- ▶ We also believe the gathered community is a similar sign of Christ's presence.
- ▶ Jesus is present in the Church, the people of God, just as he is present in the sacraments.
- ▶ How are we incorporated into that community?
- ▶ We are incorporated into the community by our participation in the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in the wider group.

- ▶ Why do you think we baptize babies during mass?
- ▶ Why do we sometimes experience a rite of sprinkling in the introductory rites of the liturgy?

Catechist makes sure the following points are offered:

- ✓ We call to mind—we bring into the present—the fact that we are baptized into the family of God, which is most fully expressed when we come together.
- ✓ We are reminded of the responsibility of our baptism.



This is the end of part one. Proceed directly to: CLOSING PRAYER

Part 2 When you begin part two in a second session, begin with the sign of the cross, an opening prayer and invite participants to summarize the previous session. At that point, begin with the material which is below.



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Catechist continues:

Invite participants to summarize what they learned in Part I.

Introductory Rites of the Mass

The Ritual Structure of the Mass

- ▶ There is a four-part ritual structure to the Mass.
 - In the Introductory Rites, week after week, we gather and are formed into God's people.
 - In the Liturgy of the Word, week after week, within the context of one complete liturgical cycle, we listen, proclaim, and encounter the living word of God.
 - In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, week after week we remember and make present the actions of Jesus in the Eucharist
 - In the dismissal, we are sent as transformed people to go out and live as a new creation.

Rituals of convening

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in wider group.

- ▶ Think of the Congress, city hall, PTA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, condominium associations, etc. Every group has rituals, no matter how subliminal they may be. All groups have some sort of gathering ritual. How, then, do such groups convene?
- ▶ What are some opening rituals of a given the group? What do those rituals express to you about the group?

Catechist draws conclusions from their responses and reminds participants that our gathering rituals have explicit purposes. They are intended to gather us, open our minds and hearts to God, prepare us to worthily celebrate, prepare us to hear and respond to God's word, prepare us to feast on Christ in the Eucharist, open our hearts to transformation of body, soul and spirit, and to become the person we are called to be, and so forth.

Catechist invites the group to respond to the following question in dyads, then surface insights in wider group.

- ▶ Based on your experience of the introductory rite of the Mass, what is the purpose and meaning of it?
- ▶ The purpose of the introductory rites is to gather and be formed as God's people.

- ▶ Gathering is part of what it means to be Catholic. Catholics exist to come together to give thanks and praise to God in worship.

Introductory Rites

- ▶ The people of God gather as the Body of Christ to do what Jesus commanded us to do, to remember him, “to do this as a memorial of me.”
- ▶ In the introductory rites, the assembly is called together by Jesus himself and established as the church.
- ▶ Christ is first present in assembly. The gathering of God’s people is the first place we encounter the presence of Christ.



Last Supper. Zarateman, 2009.
Released to the public domain.

Catechist continues:

The General Introduction to the Roman Missal teaches us about the Introductory Rites. (The Roman Missal is the red book we use that contains the ritual prayers we use at Mass.)

- ▶ The Introductory rites create an atmosphere of celebration.
- ▶ They put the assembly in proper frame of mind to listen to God's word.
- ▶ The introductory rites help people identify themselves as a worshipping community.
- ▶ They form us into a sense of Church
- ▶ There are many names for Church: community, priestly people, people of God, pilgrim people, or body of Christ.
- ▶ Liturgy demands full participation by the assembly.
- ▶ The assembly is first ministry mentioned in all documents.
- ▶ Liturgy is not spectator sport. Liturgy requires that we engage with our entire being.
- ▶ Liturgy is dialogical. It is conversational. Liturgy is an extended conversation with God.
- ▶ The introductory rites put us into contact with God and put us in the proper frame of mind to give praise and worship to God.
- ▶ Introductory rites communicate an atmosphere of hospitality to all.

Hospitality

Embodied in the Introductory Rites is the biblical understanding of hospitality.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in the wider group.

- ▶ Why do we offer hospitality to people?

Catechist continues:

- ▶ Ancient cultures believed that the extension of hospitality, especially to strangers, was a religious act.
- ▶ Hospitality and biblical faith went hand in hand, not to offer it was considered an abomination. Hospitality was a sacred duty.
- ▶ Hospitality was a very important responsibility for Israel.
- ▶ The people knew well what it meant to be a stranger in a foreign land.
- ▶ Hospitality was a way for them to extend God's mercy to others.
- ▶ Divine hospitality was a common metaphor for God's protection and care for Israel.
- ▶ The New Testament extends this hospitality a step further by insisting that the poor, oppressed, outcast, and marginalized are to be recipients of hospitality.
- ▶ Offering such hospitality is the same as offering it to Christ himself.

- ▶ It was understood that even the smallest act of hospitality to one of God's messengers, apostles, prophets, God's people, the lowly, would be richly rewarded.
- ▶ It was understood that hospitality is a sign that the kingdom of God has arrived.
- ▶ It is a witness of God's love.
- ▶ Lack of hospitality brought serious implications. There was nothing more important than to welcome a stranger in the name of the Lord.
- ▶ We are ambassadors of Jesus by virtue of baptism, to the lowly, the poor, and God's people.
- ▶ In the Introductory Rites, we offer God's own hospitality to one another and affirm that we are one family, united through him.



Sharing Faith

Catechist gives examples of hospitality. Refer to Appendix #4, then leads a discussion using these or similar questions:

- ▶ Have you ever been the recipient of God's hospitality?
- ▶ In what way were you touched by the experience?
- ▶ What did you learn from the experience?

See Appendix #5 for an example.

Catechist continues:

The introductory rites express in symbol and in truth the hospitality we are to extend to all of God's people. Let us now consider how the Introductory Rite is organized.

Structure of the Introductory Rite

The Opening Song

- ▶ Gathers the people.
- ▶ Helps the assembled community become a worshipping community.
- ▶ Helps the community listen to the word and to celebrate Eucharist.
- ▶ Fosters sense of celebration.
- ▶ Expresses that we are called by God and gathered into one community of faith.

Optional exercise: Catechist reads the words of Marty Haugen's, "All Are Welcome" to illustrate the previous principles.

Entry Procession

- ▶ The Church enjoys a long history of processions as well as a rich theology of why we process in the first place.
- ▶ People processed out of the desert behind the tribal banners.
- ▶ Processions express the theology that we are a people on the move, "on the way," on a journey to the kingdom, the kingdom of God both now and not yet.
- ▶ Symbols of our faith are emphasized in the procession: people, cross, light, and the word.
- ▶ There is a greeting. The greeting expresses mutual acknowledgment of the presence of Christ in the midst of the people. This greeting sets the tone for Mass of day and the season of the year.



The Opening Rites

1. First Option: Rite of Sprinkling

- ▶ In the rite of sprinkling, we recognize that we are sinners.
- ▶ We prepare to receive Christ in Word and Sacrament.
- ▶ God is praised and thanked for saving us through the waters of baptism.

2. Second option: Act of Penitence

- ▶ The Act of Penitence recognizes and acknowledges our sinfulness.
- ▶ It confesses the mystery of Christ's love.
- ▶ It is a litany of praise to Christ our redeemer.
- ▶ *Kyrie eleison* is Greek for "Lord, have mercy."

3. Gloria

- ▶ We praise God in song in order to open our hearts to more fully encounter him in the liturgy.

4. Opening Prayer

- ▶ Through petition to God, the opening prayer sets the tone of the celebration and prepares assembly to hear the word of God.

In sum

Thus, through the Introductory Rites we gather and are formed into God's people.

- ▶ The risen Lord is present in the midst of the gathered community.
- ▶ The gathered assembly becomes a visible sign of the Mystical Body of Christ.
- ▶ Thus, the assembly itself is the first encounter of Christ's presence in the liturgy.
- ▶ The function of these rites is to enable our communities who come from very diverse and varied life situations to become aware that they are gathered as one Body in Christ.
- ▶ The gathered community is united, poised, alert, and ready to hear and feast on God's word and sacrament.

Catechist invites participants to reflect on the implications of what they shared today.

- ▶ Name the elements of the Introductory Rites.
- ▶ What theology is expressed in the Introductory Rites of the Mass?
- ▶ Why are the Introductory Rites an important element of the eucharistic liturgy?



Community Connections

Catechist invites participants to relate what was shared today to some experience in their lives. Catechist shares an experience from his or her life and invites others to do the same.

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity taking place and makes arrangements for group participation. For example: In light of all that was shared, what is taking place in the parish this week that invites you to share God's hospitality with others, especially those to whom hospitality is seldom extended? For example, "This week we are extending hospitality to the homeless in our nearby shelter. We are also reaching out to the senior citizens in the area by providing a meal and a speaker. Perhaps we could help serve the meal and spend time with the seniors."



Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions.

- ▶ Are all of God's people truly welcome in our Sunday assemblies?
- ▶ Who is not welcome?
- ▶ Is there someone (individuals or groups of people) whom you would find difficult to welcome?
- ▶ What needs to change in you to make you more open to all of God's people?



Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions, Doxology ("Glory be to the Father..."), a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA # 90-97.

Option 2. Conclude by praying all or selected ritual prayers that customarily are found in the introductory rites of the Mass: Gloria, Rite of Sprinkling, Act of Penitence, Opening Prayer for the last or coming Sunday. Include intercessions and a sign of peace.

Appendix

#1. Many years ago, my family was presented with a book of blessings and a blessing cup to celebrate the special events of our lives. The book contains ritual prayers, Scriptures, and blessings for every conceivable event that occurs in the life cycle of families. The prayers are prayed, the Scripture proclaimed, and each member of the family shares from a common cup, the cup that hearkens back to the cup we share on Sunday. This ritual would become for us spiritual glue that would ultimately bind our family together, give us our identity not only as Catholics, but also as a family whose lives are forged by faith and by fire.

For 35 years, every event of our lives was marked by ritual, Scripture, blessing, and sharing the cup. Every birthday is a ritual. First, there were six of us, now there are eleven. Eleven times a year we celebrate the birthday blessing.

We celebrate every Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and Easter. We every time we welcome a friend to our table for a meal, it is a ritual.

Ritual marks every joy-filled or sorrow laden event of our lives—the near-death ruptured appendix, the joys and sorrows of our children, the first wedding, followed by the anguish of two miscarriages.

We ritualized the long-awaited birth of the first grandson, the birth of the precious first granddaughter, another child's wedding, the gut-wrenching diagnosis of mental illness, another child's horror and loss when all was destroyed in her home across the street from the World Trade Center on 9/11.

All the joys and sorrows of life are times for ritual. The salvation history of a family of faith, a faith forged by the fire of life's cycle of dying and rising, blessed each step along the way, passed on to each child who now passes it on to their children, passed on to family, friends and all who come in contact with this family.

Blessing, ritual, word, and tradition—ritual is the glue that holds our family's spiritual life together and that brings us back to the Sunday Eucharist each week. This ritual is now celebrated in every one of our adult children's homes. They now pray it with their children. It is ritual that gives them identity as members of our family and members of a larger reality called the Catholic Church. For them it is a powerful ritual of identity. Their blessing cup books are now becoming as tattered and torn as that of their parents.

#2. A young man was so touched by the funeral of someone who committed suicide that he decided he wanted to become a Catholic. The ritual, the sung prayer, the hope in the midst of such despair, the compassion of the community: it all affected him and propelled him to seek full initiation in the Church. Today he is a Catholic committed to the ministry of initiation and evangelization. He has assumed a leadership role in

continuing the process of reflecting on the Sunday Scriptures for those who recently became Catholic. He is a reminder that the power of liturgy should never be underestimated.

#3. A woman was raised in a bigoted home. Rather than participate in integrated schools in the deep South in the 1960s, her parents pulled her out of school at the age of 16. Many layers of healing and transformation were required before this woman became aware of her racial hatred. It was so ingrained in her that she saw nothing wrong with it. The liturgies of the Church, the scrutinies of the period of purification and enlightenment, were the final catalyst (after a year of peeling away the layers of sin each and every Sunday) of complete transformation. She realized that she could not come forward for baptism unless she was willing to turn away from this deeply ingrained hatred. The cost was high. She knew she would be rejected by her family of origin, yet she was willing and ready to embrace her new family. Liturgy absolutely has the power to transform lives. Liturgy has the power to transform absolutely!

#4. A friend was a visitor at a Midwest parish. She was startled when she intermittently heard people in the assembly shout out obscenities and foul language. No one seemed to pay any attention to the situation. She could not help herself; she had to ask what was going on. She was told that the parish made a decision to welcome a group of people with Tourettes syndrome who could find no place that would allow them to come and worship. The entire parish was consulted, and the people with this affliction were welcomed to a specific Mass. People who did not wish their children to hear such things could choose another Mass. This parish community offered God's own hospitality to this community of afflicted individuals when no one else would. All are indeed welcome!

#5. I was finishing my comprehensive exams my one summer at St. John's University School of Theology in Collegeville, MN. During the week of my exams, my extremely mentally ill son appeared on campus. He was in a psychotic state. Most institutions would have immediately expelled him from the campus. Not St. John's. Officials at St. John's believe in and put into practice the gospel they profess. The campus student affairs director, the campus police, all people involved were the hands and feet of Christ. They offered God's own hospitality to me and to my son. They saw in him the broken Christ. They held us by the hand and assisted us in getting help for my child. They did not expel him from campus; they helped me get him admitted in the hospital, something I would have had a very difficult time doing on my own. I learned that God's love and hospitality are offered through God's people and very often in ways we can never imagine. As it turns out, the campus police officer had experience in dealing with the mentally ill and had a compassionate heart for people who suffer as my son was suffering. The hospitality offered to me and to my son was the hospitable hand of God extended by his faithful servants at St. Johns.

Handout on Posture in the Liturgy

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Church acknowledged the necessary participation of the whole person in liturgical worship: “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and song, as well as by actions, gestures, and bearing” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 30).

Gestures, actions, and posture express meaning and emotion. Postures used in liturgical worship include standing, sitting, kneeling, and prostration. Postures reflect an attitude of respect, reverence, awe, adoration, supplication, contrition, and attentiveness. Postures can also be symbolic. Standing expresses the dignity of the human person and the resurrection.

Standing. Standing symbolizes human readiness and human dignity. Because of its primary meaning as an expression of respect, standing has been the principle posture of Judeo-Christian prayer. This tradition is rooted in the Scriptures. The people stood when Ezra read from the Scriptures. Standing is also the posture for the celebration of the Passover meal as it symbolizes readiness. Standing was also the model in the gospel. Jesus said, “When you stand to pray....”

The traditional Jewish posture of standing was given a new symbolism in light of the resurrection and expectation of Christ’s return. Paul used standing as a symbol that slavery had ended. The Book of Revelation added the dimension of “worthiness” to stand in the presence of God and the “readiness” to wait for his return in glory.

The posture of standing for prayer continued in the early Church. Standing was interpreted in light of the resurrection. Tertullian demanded that Christians stand on Sundays and during Easter time as a symbol of joy in the resurrection. They were forbidden to fast and to kneel during those times. Jerome agreed: “It is a time of joy and of victory when we do not kneel or bow to the earth, but risen with Christ, we are raised to the heavens.” Justin said that “we do not kneel on Sundays as a sign of the resurrection through which we are freed from our sin by the grace of Christ.”

As paschal people made worthy to stand in the presence of God through their share in the resurrection of Christ, Christians stand ready to greet him when he comes again. In the contemporary understanding of posture, standing is once again the principle posture of Christian prayer. It is an innate response to stand in praise of God.

“The faithful should stand from the beginning of the Entrance chant, or while the priest approaches the altar, until the end of the Collect; for the Alleluia chant before the Gospel; while the Gospel itself is proclaimed; during the Profession of Faith and the Prayer of the Faithful; from the invitation, Orate, fratres (Pray, brethren), before the

prayer over the offerings until the end of Mass, except at the places indicated below.

“They should, however, sit while the readings before the Gospel and the responsorial Psalm are proclaimed and for the homily and while the Preparation of the Gifts at the Offertory is taking place; and, as circumstances allow, they may sit or kneel while the period of sacred silence after Communion is observed.

“In the dioceses of the United States of America, they should kneel beginning after the singing or recitation of the Sanctus until after the Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented on occasion by reasons of health, lack of space, the large number of people present, or some other good reason. Those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration. The faithful kneel after the Agnus Dei unless the Diocesan Bishop determines otherwise. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 43).”

(If there is sitting for reflection after communion, it is understood that all remain standing as a sign of unity until everyone has received communion.)

Uniformity of posture is demanded by the communal nature of liturgical worship: “A common posture, to be observed by all participants, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the Sacred Liturgy: it both expresses and fosters the intention and spiritual attitude of the participants” (General Instruction to the Roman Missal, 42).

Kneeling. This posture signifies supplication and adoration. It also has a penitential meaning and can be a posture for private prayer. It is a sign of humility. It denotes a sense of awe before God. Kneeling is also a gesture of prayer in the Scriptures. In the earliest centuries, it was believed to be an inappropriate posture for Sunday Eucharist because of the penitential overtones and the private nature of the posture. It was forbidden during the Easter season at the Council of Nicaea. St. Irenaeus explains: “The practice of not kneeling on the Lord's Day is a symbol of the resurrection by which, thanks to Christ, we have been delivered from the death which he put to death.”

Patristic writers do acknowledge the use of kneeling as a posture of humility and penitence to be used at other times besides Sunday and during the Easter Season. “As for other times, who would hesitate to bow before God, at least for the first prayer by which we begin the day? And on the days of fasting, all the prayers are made kneeling.”

During the Middle Ages, this changed, and kneeling became the normative posture for liturgical prayer, except for Sundays and solemnities. It was a posture of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. The role of the assembly changed during that time. Rather than a community made worthy by the resurrection of Christ, they became unworthy penitents, unable to even touch the sacred species. Their participation in the liturgy continued to diminish into a passive, spectator role. Private prayer, penance, and distant adoration

became the dominant mode of eucharistic worship which continued until the 20th century. Communion was received kneeling due to this understanding of the assembly's role.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy restored the assembly's role as full participants. Except for the designated use of kneeling in the liturgy, liturgical law reserves this ancient posture for private prayer and devotion and for occasional liturgical use.

Sitting. This posture signifies presence and resting. It is used by one who presides with authority over a group and by those who receive instruction. One presides with power and authority from a throne. Jesus often sat as he taught the disciples (i.e. Sermon on the Mount). The person who listens attentively is also seated. In liturgical usage sitting is used for reflection, meditation, and receiving instruction.

Mass Part I: Overview of Ritual, Introductory Rites: Handout

- ▶ We worship God because it actualizes, that is, it makes real and present, our relationship with God and one another.
- ▶ Worship puts us into contact with salvation history, with the God of that history who is God of the present and of the future.
- ▶ We worship God because we need to worship God. God does not need our worship, however.
- ▶ God created us with a longing to worship God. When we worship God, we experience what it means to be fully human.
- ▶ God is completely deserving of our praise.
- ▶ God fills our emptiness, responds to our loneliness, and expands our human heart. God fills the void with his presence.
- ▶ Worship is the way we actualize—make real—our beliefs about God. The principle, *lex orandi lex credendi*—the rule of prayer constitutes the rule of belief—we pray what we believe and we believe what we pray, reminds us that in our worship we bring the truths of our faith front and center. We remember them, celebrate them, pray them, and make them our own.

Second Vatican Council

- ▶ Most significant event of 20th century was renewal of liturgy.
- ▶ The first action of the Second Vatican Council was to reestablish the liturgy to its rightful place, central to the life of the Church, the source and summit of the Church's life and action.
- ▶ Primary goal of the Council was to restore and secure full, conscious active participation in the liturgy.
- ▶ The desired outcome was transformation of people's lives which is called *metanoia*. This is a complete conversion of heart, mind, and soul. The concern is not the renewal of ritual texts or vernacular, but people's lives.

Ritual Language

Thus, ritual uses symbols and symbolic actions to speak.

- ▶ The symbols and symbolic actions of the liturgy help us get in touch with who God is and how God acts. For example, the symbol of light expresses evokes and makes present the reality that God brings us out of darkness, God lights our path, and God warms our heart with the light of his presence.
- ▶ We need our bodies in order to express who we are. Human beings are symbol makers. Human beings possess a basic, intrinsic need to find meaning in their existence. As such, they use symbols to express their identity and how they understand that identity.
- ▶ Christians use symbolic elements (bread, wine, book, oil, water, cross, hands, garment, community, cross) to express how they understand themselves in

relation to creation, in relation to God and one another.

- Consider the symbol of the bread. We are people of the bread. We draw meaning from our participation in the Eucharist. It is the primary food that feeds us. We consume the bread, the bread consumes us. We take, bless, break, and share the Bread of Life, and we too are taken, blessed, broken and shared. We are willing to allow our bodies to be broken, just as Christ's Body was broken for us. We are willing to become bread for others, to go out in the world and spiritually and practically feed others, and to feed the world. We are given access to the sacrifice of the cross that took place 2,000 years ago but the effects of which continue today as Christians gather to remember it in the eucharistic liturgy.

Ritual Actions

- The ritual actions and gestures of the liturgy convey and express a rich theology: raised hands, hands in the *orans* position (praying hands), processions, kneeling, bowing, standing, or sitting.
- Inherent in every gesture and action of the liturgy is a theology that expresses what we believe about God and about our relationship with God.
- The posture of standing in and of itself possesses a rich heritage.
- In the early Church, standing was interpreted in light of the resurrection. Tertullian demanded that Christians stand on Sundays and during Easter time as a symbol of joy in the resurrection. They were forbidden to fast and to kneel during those times.
- Jerome agreed: "It is a time of joy and of victory when we do not kneel or bow to the earth, but risen with Christ, we are raised to the heavens."
- Justin said that "we do not kneel on Sundays as a sign of the resurrection through which we are freed from our sin by the grace of Christ." We are an Easter people and standing with hands raised is an expression of our joy in the resurrection. Refer to the handout on posture.
- The gestures and ritual actions of the liturgy contribute to the beauty and noble simplicity of the liturgy (GIRM, 42).

Ritual Prayers

- The ritual prayers and the spoken words of the liturgy is primary ritual language.
- Ritual prayers express our theology of God and of the Church. Ritual prayer expresses what we celebrate and believe about the seasons of the Church year.
- Ritual prayer expresses and gives definition to the ritual actions.
- Word and action together are required in every sacramental sign. Ritual prayer is integral language in the liturgy.

Space

- Sacred space is ritual language. Sacred space speaks to us. Why do we gather in a church rather than a football stadium? Sacred space speaks to us of the holy, the transcendent.

- ▶ The sights, smells, the art and environment prepares us and propels us to worship today but also puts us in touch with the communion of saints worshipping throughout salvation history.
- ▶ Sacred space speaks to us of our participation in that holy college of believers and with our participation in that history.

The Meaning of Liturgy

- ▶ The primary ritual celebration for Catholics is the eucharistic liturgy.
- ▶ We remember and make present the death and resurrection of Jesus, the paschal mystery.
- ▶ Liturgy has everything to do with our lives.
- ▶ Every sacrament, every gathering of God's people, celebrates the paschal mystery (the life, mission, passion, death, resurrection, ascension of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit). However, we also live the paschal mystery in our everyday lives. We join our lives to Christ, and in the process, we participate in his ongoing work of redemption in the world.
- ▶ The word Liturgy comes from the Greek *liturgia*, which means the *work of people*.
- ▶ The work of the people we focus on today is the first part of the Mass—the introductory rites.
- ▶ In order to understand a theology of the introductory rite we must understand what it means to be Church. We must understand our Church's ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology: theology of Church

The Church teaches....

- ▶ The first sacrament we encounter when we gather for Mass is Christ himself who is present to us in four ways:
 - Christ is present in community
 - Christ is present in the proclamation of the word
 - Christ is present in the body and blood of Christ, the Eucharist
 - Christ is present in the person of the priest (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 7)
- ▶ The Church teaches that Christ is the first sacrament of God.
- ▶ What is a sacrament? A sacrament is a sign that makes that which is signified present. Thus, as a sacrament of God, Jesus is a sign. He is the reality of God's presence.
- ▶ When we gather for liturgy, we also believe that the Church is like a sacrament. In other words, the Church is a sign. It is the reality of God or Christ in our midst.
- ▶ The people of Israel in the Old Testament believed that the community itself was a sign of God's presence.
- ▶ We also believe the gathered community is a similar sign of Christ's presence.

- ▶ Jesus is present in the Church, the people of God, just as he is present in the sacraments.
- ▶ How are we incorporated into that community?
- ▶ We are incorporated into the community by our participation in the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.